



# ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN MINNESOTA: AN OVERVIEW



## A Critical Part of Minnesota's Talent Pipeline

*Adult Basic Education Serves the Needs of Individuals, Employers, and a Changing Economy*

Nearly one in five Minnesotans over age 25 do not have a high school diploma, and many who do still lack the basic skills necessary for employment. Adult Basic Education (ABE) connects these adults to the skills, supports, and opportunities they need to gain stability and self-sufficiency, get on the path to a career, and contribute to society as workers, parents, and citizens.

Technology and globalization are re-making Minnesota's economy. Workers and employers increasingly rely on higher-level skills to compete and succeed. At the same time, Minnesota faces a looming shortage of skilled workers as the baby boomer generation retires. The growth of our economy will depend largely on our ability to build the skills of all Minnesotans – including low-skill adults and immigrants.

Minnesota ABE is in a critical position to address these challenges. Constantly adapting to meet the changing needs of workers and employers alike, Minnesota's ABE system forges new partnerships with local employers, community and technical colleges, and community organizations to support the varied needs of adult learners.

### Who Does ABE Serve?

Approximately **60,000 Minnesota adults** with a wide range of educational needs and abilities from pre-literate to near college-level.

- 46% are English Language Learners
- 60% lack a high school diploma
- 29% are unemployed
- 12% receive public assistance<sup>2</sup>

### What Services Does ABE Provide?

ABE provides a variety of services to help adults build skills and increase employability:

- GED<sup>®3</sup> and Adult Diploma Classes
- English Language Acquisition Classes
- College and Postsecondary Education Preparation
- Occupational and Workplace Skills Preparation
- Family Literacy and Parenting Instruction
- Citizenship/Civics Education
- Basic Skills Enhancement
- Digital Literacy

### How Are ABE Services Delivered?

Forty-four local ABE Consortia – formal collaborations among partners that coordinate services and leverage local resources – serve the specific needs of their communities at over 500 sites across Minnesota. A local consortium may offer services at a variety of sites based on its partners, which include:

- Public Schools
- WorkForce Centers
- Community and Technical Colleges
- Businesses
- Correctional Facilities
- Libraries
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Learning Centers
- Tribal Centers
- Online Distance Learning

### Many Working-Age Adults Need ABE Services<sup>1</sup>

Of the approximately 3.3 million working-age adults in Minnesota:

**251,210**

have not completed high school

**892,744**

have completed high school but have not entered college (most require remedial reading or math)

**61,327**

speak "little or no" English

**832,371**

have some college but have not completed a degree or credential (48% require remedial reading or math)

**346,968**

earn less than a living wage (twice the federal poverty level of \$11,880 for individuals or \$24,300 for a family of four)



**Investments in Minnesota ABE** meet the critical workforce challenges of the **new economy.**

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Profile of Adult Learners. (2009). The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Retrieved from <http://www.cael.org/pdfs/alif-state-profiles/minnesota>

<sup>2</sup> National Reporting System for Adult Education Data. (2014-2015). U.S. Department of Education.

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## Minnesota's Skills Shortage

Minnesota is approaching a workforce skills shortage due to an aging and retiring workforce and the growing skills needs of employers resulting from globalization and technological change.

As it stands, Minnesota's adult workforce will not be able to accommodate the skills and education demands of employers to fill jobs in Minnesota.

**The challenge is clear: building the skills of Minnesota's low-skill adults is essential to our state's economic future. ABE is a critical part of the solution.**



### A Mismatch Between Skills and Jobs

In Minnesota, a 2011 survey showed the nearly half of manufacturers had positions that were unfilled due to a lack of qualified applicants. One in eight reported having at least 10 percent of their jobs unfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Nationally, two thirds of employers reported having positions for which they often cannot find qualified applicants, according to a 2011 survey.<sup>2</sup>

## ABE Program Impact: Key Goals and Approaches

Minnesota ABE is nationally recognized for its outcomes, its innovative approaches and partnerships, and its commitment to the varied needs of its participants. In every year since 2002, the Minnesota ABE system has exceeded its federally-set performance targets, which include academic completion, GED<sup>®3</sup> attainment, employment, and transition into postsecondary education.

*The following key aspects of Minnesota ABE correspond to sections of this report where you can learn more about the program's impact:*

### INCREASING EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

The overarching goal of Minnesota ABE is to connect low-skill adults with opportunities for employment and career advancement. ABE works with employers and industry to meet the changing needs of the job market, constantly adapting to ensure low-skill adults gain skills that are in high-demand and lead to well-paying jobs.

### PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND CREDENTIALING

Minnesota ABE is a national leader in its use of innovative program models to help low-skill adults prepare for and access postsecondary education and training. In partnership with community and technical colleges, WorkForce Centers, and employers, Minnesota ABE has implemented cutting-edge career pathways efforts that integrate basic skills instruction with career and technical training to create more fluid and manageable educational experiences that break down barriers for adult learners.

### ADDRESSING POVERTY AND WELFARE

Minnesota ABE works with community partners to help low-skill adults increase their stability and self-sufficiency. By building skills while addressing the wider array of barriers low-skill adults and their families face, the program helps to break cycles of poverty and reduce reliance on public assistance.



### SERVING NEW AMERICANS

Minnesota ABE recognizes the important role that immigrants can play in helping to address Minnesota's skill shortages, and is at the forefront of efforts to prepare New Americans to be productive workers and citizens.

### DISTANCE LEARNING AND DIGITAL LITERACY

Minnesota ABE uses effective distance learning models, often paired with classroom instruction, to expand educational options for adults who work and have families. At the same time, the program has embraced a broader definition of literacy that incorporates skills increasingly needed for success in a digital, online world.

<sup>1</sup> Ho-Kim, T. (2011, November). Understanding the Needs of Manufacturers: The 2011 Minnesota Skills Gap Report. Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

<sup>2</sup> Manyika, J. et al. An Economy that Works: Job Creation and America's Future. (2011, June). McKinsey Global Institute.

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## The Ultimate Goal of ABE: Putting Skills to Work

Ensuring Minnesota's Adults Have the Skills to Access Opportunity and Compete Globally

As our economy grows more global and more technologically advanced, the basic level of skills required to compete and succeed on the job grows as well. Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) plays a key role in ensuring adults have the necessary skills and, ultimately, the opportunity to put them to work.

Improving the employment and earnings prospects for Minnesota adults is a major focus of ABE programs, which develop the workforce skills of Minnesota's low-skill adults in a number of ways:

- Enhancing basic skills at ABE sites, WorkForce Centers, and community and technical college campuses around the state, creating a strong foundation for further study and training.
- Leading the charge to build "career pathways" programs in partnership with employers, community and technical colleges, and providers of job training and social services to increase the literacy and work skills of adults while helping them transition into promising postsecondary training and employment opportunities.
- Collaborating with local employers to ensure foundational skills in basic literacy, numeracy, and

### America's Workforce Challenge

"While other countries have been showing improvements in equipping their adult populations with the skills needed to be productive in their society, the United States has remained relatively unchanged in the decade since the last report, thus falling further behind their international counterparts... The large number of low skill adults who have trouble reading, doing math, solving problems, and using technology will find the doors of the 21st century workforce closed to them."<sup>1</sup>

English are taught in the context of specific careers, and to occasionally provide Workforce Education programs at the place of employment.

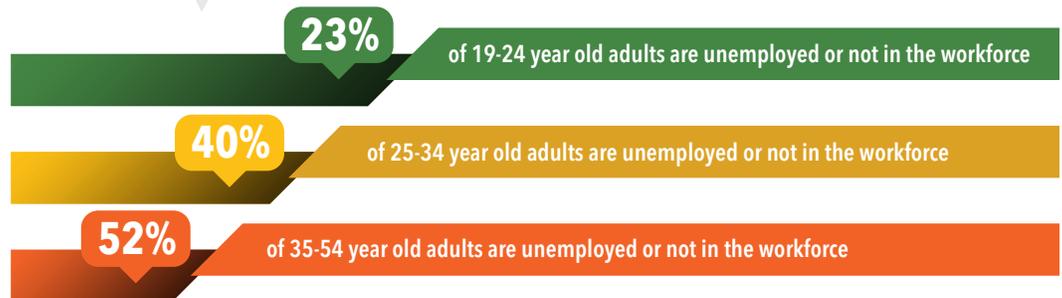
- Collaborating with the Northstar Digital Literacy project to provide essential computer and online skills to help low-skill adults bridge the digital divide.

### About All of Minnesota's Low-Skill Adults<sup>2</sup>

**356,032** MINNESOTA ADULTS are without a high school credential

**83,869** MINNESOTA ADULTS do not speak English well or at all with 63% of these adults without a high school credential

#### OF THESE ADULTS WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA



This represents a tremendous loss of human potential for Minnesota. These adults represent a key target population for ABE services.

The **average cost to taxpayers** for each high school dropout is **\$292,000 over their working life**, including incarceration costs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vis, K., and Field, S. (2013). Time for the U.S. to Reskill? What the Survey of Adult Skills Says. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Excerpted from an abstract retrieved from <https://iincs.ed.gov/professional-development/resource-collections/profile-730>

<sup>2</sup>Tapping the Potential: Profile of Adult Education Target Population—Minnesota State Profile. U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/state-profiles/minnesota.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Sum, A., et al. (2009, October). The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School. Center for Labor Market Studies. Northeastern University.



## Boosting Employment in Northwest Minnesota

Northwest Minnesota provides many opportunities for employment in manufacturing and healthcare – for those who have the requisite skills.

That is why ABE programs within the Northwest Service Cooperative work hard to ensure that adults in the region with low literacy or English skills make it into college or job training.

Covering nearly 11,000 square miles and 27 school districts, the Northwest Service Cooperative provides 20 classrooms around the area. It also makes ABE teachers available on college campuses including Northwest Technical College and the Northland Community and Technical College at both its Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks locations. ABE teachers work with adults to develop the reading, math and digital literacy skills crucial for college success.

### Opportunities in Healthcare: Evelyn's Story

Evelyn Mosher grew up in the Philippines where her family was poor and her parents did not have the money to send her to college.



Evelyn Mosher

She worked in a variety of low-skill jobs including inspecting bottles for a beverage manufacturer. In 2009 she moved to Minnesota and discovered that there was a demand for skilled healthcare workers, including phlebotomists, therapists, x-ray technicians and nurses.

Since then, Evelyn has learned English, earned her GED<sup>®1</sup> and became a United States citizen through participation in ABE classes. She is currently strengthening her reading vocabulary and computer skills at Northland Community and Technical College, where she made the President's List. Her goal is to become college-ready and enroll in the nursing program. According to Evelyn, **"I could not have done what I've done without ABE."**

### Opportunities in Geospatial Intelligence: Noah's Story

Noah Berg dropped out of high school. While he had some fun with friends and even spent time biking to Alaska, he also felt stuck and hopeless. "I worked a lot of unrewarding jobs, like dishwashing, barely making minimum wage," says Noah.



Noah Berg

A social worker referred him to ABE, where he completed his GED<sup>®</sup> with perfect scores on several sections of the test. ABE staff helped

Noah consider the question, "What next?" and steered him toward one of their college partnership initiatives with Northland Community and Technical College. Noah entered a program with many students who were twice his age and had much more education. "I was very nervous that first day. **I credit my GED teacher with talking me into it, giving me support, and ensuring that I didn't drop out,** which I almost did."

Noah completed an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in Geospatial Intelligence Analysis, where he finished at the top of his class. He plans to enter a Bachelor of Science program in Geography next.

The median annual earnings in his intended career field is \$40,000-\$60,000, and some advanced careers pay up to \$150,000. With determination, hard work and support from ABE, Noah is much closer to providing a solid financial foundation for himself and his family – while doing work much more meaningful to him than washing dishes.

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## Adult Basic Education Addresses the Skills Gap

Minnesota's ABE Programs Provide a Stepping Stone to Higher Education and Careers

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs play a vital role in helping low-skill adults succeed in education and career-oriented training. ABE prepares adults for successful completion of the GED®<sup>1</sup> or Adult Diploma in the context of a career field, and helps them transition to credit-based college and career pathways coursework leading to postsecondary credentials and new opportunities in the workforce.

Highlights of these efforts:

- Minnesota ABE provides additional support to English language learners to successfully use their new language skills in postsecondary education settings.
- Minnesota ABE programs help adult learners strengthen their readiness for postsecondary coursework, reducing their need for remedial college classes and associated tuition costs.
- Minnesota ABE has blazed the trail in building the Academic, Career & Employability (ACES) skills that adults need to be successful in higher education and the workforce, with an emphasis on continual professional development to help ABE teachers

### WHAT IS THE SKILLS GAP?

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that **74% of Minnesota jobs will require some postsecondary education by 2020.**<sup>2</sup>

A skills gap is emerging because there are not enough Minnesotans in the traditional educational pipeline to meet the growing demand for education and skills. **This is why boosting the skills of lower-skill adults is so crucial.**

to integrate basic skills education, postsecondary readiness, and employability skills.

- As a primary driver of the FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways approach (see the following page), Minnesota ABE has been a leader in efforts to develop a comprehensive workforce preparation system in Minnesota.

### The Impact of ABE on Higher Education Outcomes, 2007–2012<sup>3</sup>

1/5

One-fifth of ABE students enrolled in credit or non-credit courses at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) within two years after their ABE service year.

7.2

On average, ABE learners registered for 21.8 credits in 7.2 classes during or within one year after their ABE service year.

72.6

Of credit students across five fall courses (2007-2011), nearly three-quarters (72.6%) of ABE students persisted, transferred, or graduated by their first spring semester.

3,765

3,765 ABE students earned a total of 5,205 sub-baccalaureate awards from MnSCU between fiscal years 2008 and 2012.

66.8

66.8 percent of ABE graduates were employed in the second calendar quarter after their fiscal year of graduation, earning a median wage rate of \$11.92 an hour.

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<sup>2</sup> Carnevale, A., et al. (2013, June). Recovery: Projections of Jobs and Educational Requirements Through 2020. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

<sup>3</sup> Enrollment, Persistence, Graduation and Employment of ABE Learners and FastTRAC Participants at MnSCU. (2013, June 25). System Office Research, Planning and Policy. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.



# PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING & CREDENTIALING



## Successful FastTRAC Programming in Southwest Minnesota

ABE programs in Southwest Minnesota have built extensive relationships with employers, community and technical colleges, community-based organizations, and others to foster career pathway opportunities.

### Spotlight: Pre-Health Care Bridge Program

ABE works with Minnesota West Community & Technical College, the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council (SW MN PIC) and healthcare employers to build “bridges” for adults into promising healthcare careers.

#### Danielle’s Story

Danielle came to FastTRAC from the Refuge Program, which provided her shelter after surviving an abusive relationship and months of homelessness. Though she had a child to care for and no transportation, she was determined to make some changes in her life and found a passion for a career in health care. Though there were many bumps in the road that brought Danielle to the edge of giving up, the FastTRAC program made all the difference. The SW MN PIC program provided assistance while **Avera Health** provided employment with flexible work hours to support Danielle in completing her training. Danielle’s Adult Basic Education instructor helped make

coursework less intimidating, team-teaching with college level teachers. Her fellow participants became like a family to her. Currently a Trained Medication Aide, she plans to continue on to nursing school. According to Danielle, **“The FastTRAC program has driven me to go further. I can’t believe where I’m at right now. It’s also awesome how my success will impact my children’s future.”**



Danielle in action

**“Our biggest problem... has been hiring qualified staff.** Two years ago I learned about the FastTRAC Health Care Training program. **I have hired individuals from this program and they have been among my best hires.** Not only do they have the basic knowledge and certification required, but they also have enhanced math for the healthcare field, computer skills and employability along with soft skills. **Their motivation and commitment to their training translates into the workplace.”**

– Jason Swanson, Executive Director of the Prairie View Healthcare Center in Tracy, Minnesota

### About Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways

Minnesota FastTRAC (Training, Resources and Credentialing) is an approach that integrates basic skills education, career-oriented postsecondary training, and support services to ensure the success of low-skill adults. FastTRAC programs are built by local partnerships including ABE, colleges, WorkForce Centers, social services providers, and employers. Together, partners design sequences of educational offerings that are manageable for working adults and lead to careers in high-demand, well-paying fields.

### Spotlight: Welding Bridge Program

ABE works with Minnesota West Community & Technical College, the Redwood Area Development Corporation, and manufacturing employers to create “bridges” for adults into high demand and highly-paid welding jobs.

#### A Brothers’ Story: Engineering and Alexander

Engineering and Alexander moved to Redwood Falls with their family in 2007. After finishing high school, they got jobs at McDonald’s. Their mother learned about the FastTRAC program through a Community Education bulletin and encouraged them to enroll. Although welding was new to Engineering, it came easy and he became the most skilled welder in his class. Alexander was grateful for the program after feeling like he was “going nowhere.” **Activeaid, Inc.** has since hired both of them. Engineering is a talented TIG welder, a hard-to-find skill, while Alexander’s niche is powder coating metals used to make the company’s sought-after rehabilitation chairs. With new skills and gainful employment, the brothers are hoping to save money and go back to college, with a clear vision of their future.



Engineering



Alexander



## ABE Provides Skills for Stability and Self-Sufficiency

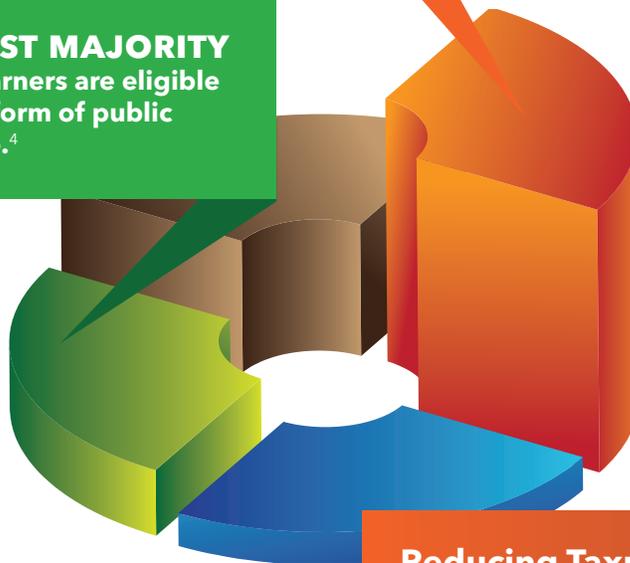
Poverty has been on the rise in recent years across the United States and in Minnesota, and especially among children. Many Minnesotans who live in poverty – unemployed parents hit hard by economic downturns in particular – seek assistance through programs like the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).

According to a report by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, education is the second most serious barrier facing MFIP recipients (after financial barriers).<sup>1</sup> A lack of basic workplace skills and job-seeking skills are also major barriers. Moreover, ten to seventeen percent of MFIP recipients are refugees or other legal non-citizens, many of whom lack basic English skills.<sup>2</sup>

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs help improve the educational skills of adults in poverty and on public assistance, including English Language Arts (ELA) classes for adults who need them. Importantly, basic skills education is integrated with employability skills that are critical to finding and keeping a job.

**39%** of MFIP recipients do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Among those that do, many still have low literacy levels and reading and math abilities well below the 12th grade level. This makes finding and retaining employment difficult for this group.<sup>3</sup>

**THE VAST MAJORITY** of ABE learners are eligible for some form of public assistance.<sup>4</sup>



### Reducing Taxpayer Costs

ABE services are cost-effective because improving literacy and educational skills helps families in poverty increase their earnings and achieve economic self-sufficiency.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, parents – and especially mothers – who gain literacy skills are more likely to exert a positive influence on their children’s academic achievement, helping to break cycles of poverty.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2013, February). MFIP Participants: Strengths and Barriers to Employment. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfs/edocs/Public/DHS-6373D-ENG>  
<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2013, February). Non-citizen Participation in Family Assistance Programs. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfs/edocs/Public/DHS-6373F-ENG>  
<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2014, December). MFIP and DWP: Characteristics of Cases and Eligible Adults. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfs/edocs/Public/DHS-4219Q-ENG>  
<sup>4</sup> Rough estimate based on Minnesota Adult Basic Education program data.  
<sup>5</sup> Hollenbeck, K., and Huang, W. (2014). Net Impact and Benefit-Cost Estimates of the Workforce Development System in Washington State. Upjohn Institute Technical Report No. 13-029.  
<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, L. Ann. (1993, August). Parents’ Literacy and Their Children’s Success in School: Recent Research, Promising Practices, and Research Implications. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.



## Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: ABE and Community-Based Organizations

### Spotlight: Neighborhood House

Organizations such as Neighborhood House in Saint Paul have been working for years to break the cycle of poverty. Helping low-income families and individuals stabilize their lives is foundational to their mission, from food shelves, crisis intervention, refugee resettlement, health access, and programming for at-risk youth.

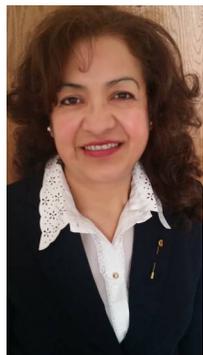
At the same time, Neighborhood House has recognized the vital importance of education in assisting these families to move from “survive to thrive”. Neighborhood House serves as a vibrant example of a community-based organization that works to provide quality ABE in addition to basic needs services. Their College Access Initiative serves both adult learners and high school students, providing GED®<sup>1</sup> preparation, English, civics education and math programming.

### ABE to College Pathways: Liliana’s Story

Liliana Sanchez attended GED classes at the Neighborhood House and earned her GED in December of 2013. Since then she has worked closely with Neighborhood House’s College Access Specialist and College Readiness Instructor to complete college preparation work, explore degree pathways, and develop her future plans. In 2015 she will attend Saint Paul College. She continues to communicate with students in Neighborhood House programs and is an inspiration for many to complete their GED and beyond.

### Gabriela’s Story

Gabriela Alonso first started coming to Neighborhood House Adult Education classes back in April 2010 before gaining employment. Three years later, she returned to the program when her previous employment ended. From 2013 through 2014 she participated in the Advanced English class, where she was a leader in the classroom, encouraging students with kind determination and optimism. After six months of studying English, she joined an intensive workplace training program available through the Neighborhood House’s West Side



Gabriela Alonso



**Neighborhood House**<sup>™</sup>



Liliana Sanchez

Employment Collaborative designed to help students build their professional and academic skills. Working with trainers and Adult Education teachers, she has enrolled at Saint Paul College where she is currently earning a certificate in translation.

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## Helping Adult Immigrants Succeed

ABE provides the skills to help foreign-born Minnesota Residents flourish as workers and citizens.

### Immigration to Minnesota

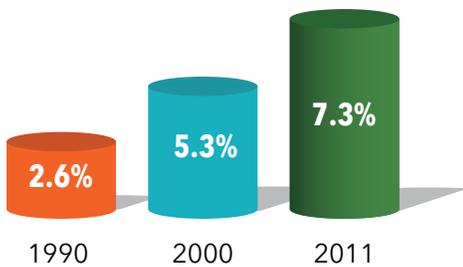
Minnesota has become a major immigration destination for our country's newest Americans. In 2014, approximately 385,000 Minnesota residents were foreign-born.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there are about 173,000 Minnesota-born children with at least one immigrant parent. Many immigrants to our state are refugees or asylees who have fled their home countries. This dramatic influx of immigrants has had far reaching effects on communities across Minnesota.

### A New and Important Source of Skills for Minnesota

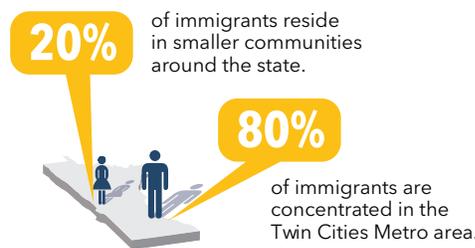
Educating and upskilling Minnesota's foreign-born population, who are often concentrated in lower-skill jobs, is a necessity for the state's economic future. Immigrants represent a new source of talent that will be important to the workforce needs of Minnesota in coming decades as Minnesota's aging population increasingly reaches retirement. This is especially true given the dwindling population growth among younger non-immigrant Minnesotans.

## About Minnesota's Immigrant Population<sup>2</sup>

### Growth of Minnesota's Foreign-Born Population

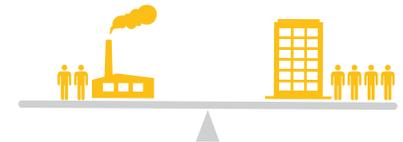


### Where New Americans Reside



### Participation in the Workforce

Foreign-born residents tend to be concentrated at the high and low ends of the workforce spectrum. A majority are concentrated in low-skill employment such as meat packing, poultry processing and similar agriculture-related work.



An estimated **250,000 Minnesota residents** need **English as a Second Language (ESL)** services.<sup>3</sup>

**63% of Minnesota residents** who do not speak English well or at all lack a high school credential and have **no postsecondary education.**<sup>4</sup>

### How do Minnesota ABE Programs Assist New Americans?

Minnesota's ABE programs have extensive experience and expertise working with immigrant populations as they arrive in Minnesota, helping them increase their English proficiency and obtain citizenship. ABE services also help New Americans obtain high school equivalency, and most importantly, prepare for postsecondary education and training toward higher-paid, in-demand career pathways.

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. (2014). U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup> Decennial Census and the American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates. (2014). U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates. (2014). U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>4</sup> Tapping the Potential: Profile of Adult Education Target Population—Minnesota State Profile. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/state-profiles/minnesota.pdf>



## Successful Programming for New Americans in Mankato

Minnesota ABE programs at the Lincoln Community Center have developed deep-rooted relationships within Mankato to help New Americans become successful members of their new community.

ABE programs at the Lincoln Community Center provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adult immigrants and refugees at any level of English proficiency, along with extra support in classes like writing and mathematics. Furthermore, ABE supports these adults in working toward citizenship, preparing for the GED®<sup>1</sup>, and ultimately engaging in postsecondary education and a career.

For these adult immigrants and refugees – who come from places like Somalia, Sudan, Mexico, and Vietnam – the Lincoln Center is so much more than a school. Lincoln Center staff actively partner with Pre-K, K-12 schools, community and technical colleges, and the Mankato Area Refugee Consortium to ensure that immigrant and refugee needs are fully addressed and families are well-integrated into the community. The Lincoln Community Center even provides a preschool where children can stay while their parents attend ABE classes, providing both parents and children the educational support they need to succeed.



### Immigrant Acclamation to Mankato

Mankato ABE works within the local school district and the Minnesota Council of Churches to provide home visits to all newly arrived immigrant and refugee families. Home visitors assist families with school enrollment and connect them to important education and social services resources. They help parents learn how to navigate these systems and to advocate for what they need.

ABE also convenes forums for K-12 administrators and ESL teachers in the Mankato district to ensure that immigrant and refugee needs are well-understood and that parents are referred to ABE programming.



### Fatima's Story

As a little girl in Somalia, Fatima dreamed of going to school and getting a good education. She quickly realized her dream would be next to impossible, since her family and tribe did not believe girls should be educated. As the civil war began in Somalia, Fatima's family arranged her marriage to protect and move her away from the country. After many hardships, including a harrowing sea voyage and time spent in a refugee camp, Fatima was able to come to the United States with her husband and young son.

Entering the Early Childhood program at the Lincoln Community Center has made all the difference for Fatima and her family. Fatima is gaining the education she never thought she would have and continues to improve her literacy skills. Through a combination of home visits, preschool classroom interventions, parenting skills, guidance and support, her son is making the transition to a new life in America from a very difficult life in the refugee camp. Fatima is so happy to see her son learning and preparing for kindergarten. According to her, **"Coming to Lincoln School is the best thing that has happened in my life."**



### ABE Class Profile: E-Power

E-Power students and teachers speak regularly at community forums attended by Mankato-area social services personnel in order to help providers understand the challenges faced by immigrant and refugee families. In turn, E-Power teachers integrate real-life community skills into their ABE instruction, such as understanding law enforcement, finding housing or advocating with landlords, health and safety issues, and much more.

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## Minnesota Embraces New Approaches to Instruction

*Adult Basic Education Offers Additional Opportunities Through Distance Learning*

Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) helps Minnesotans prepare for the future by offering Distance Learning options that respond to the needs of adult students.

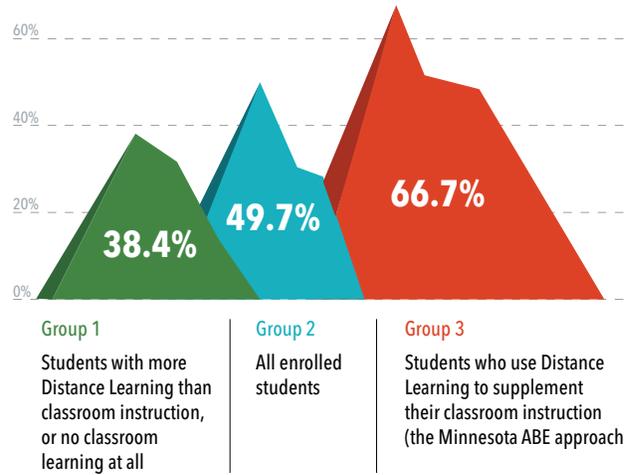
### What is Distance Learning?

Distance Learning provides the option to learn outside the classroom, giving students greater flexibility to set their own pace. Courses can be offered completely online or as a combination of classroom learning and online study.

### Why is Distance Learning Important?

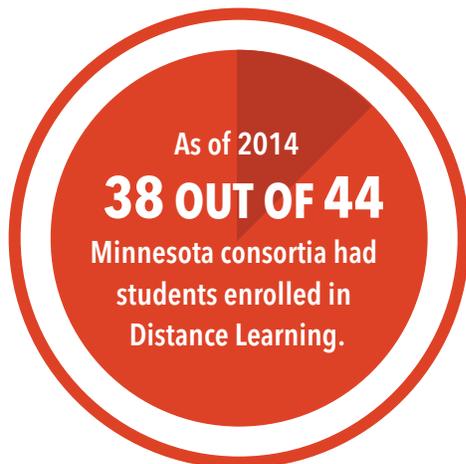
Research shows that Distance Learning combined effectively with classroom instruction is the most successful approach for increasing adult student achievement because learning is amplified and reinforced.<sup>1,2</sup>

### Adult Student Level Gains on Standardized Tests<sup>2</sup>



### How do ABE Programs Use Distance Learning to Support Adult Students?

The vast majority of ABE programs across Minnesota now offer a combination of Distance Learning and classroom instruction. As a result, adult students have greater access to courses that successfully prepare them for employment and postsecondary education in a more flexible and convenient setting.



The number of Minnesota ABE sites offering Distance Learning is growing and the quality of the Distance Learning programming continues to improve.

### Metro North ABE: Thanh Vy Nguyen

Thanh Vy arrived in the United States from Vietnam without a high school diploma and only limited English skills. She attended classes at the Metro North ABE site in Blaine where she passed all her ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, completed her GED<sup>®3</sup> and passed her Citizenship test with ABE assistance. For over six months, Thanh Vy has been enrolled in the Distance Learning program to fit a busy schedule that includes both education and work. The extra time on the computer improved her understanding of English grammar and helped her score higher on the ACCUPLACER<sup>™</sup> test



to gain admission to North Hennepin Community College. She hopes to do college-level work toward a degree in Medical Laboratory Technology. Distance Learning allowed her to work on her own time and at her own pace to go the extra mile toward her goal.

<sup>1</sup> Gungor, R., & Prins, E. (2011). Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education: A Review of the Literature. Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>2</sup> Cytron-Hysom, T. (2014, October 19). Hybrid Distance Learning Programs Increase Student NRS Gains. MN ABE News, ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System (ATLAS).

<sup>3</sup> GED<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the American Council on Education (ACE) and administered exclusively by GED Testing Service LLC under license. The content of this report is not endorsed or approved by ACE or GED Testing Service.



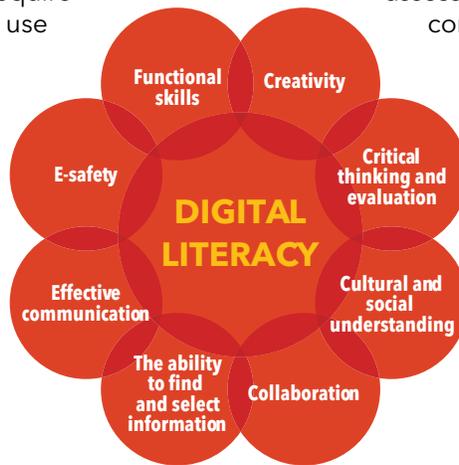
## Digital Literacy: A Key Aspect of ABE Programming

### Why is Digital Literacy Important?

In today's world, literacy is more than just the ability to read and write. Most jobs increasingly require the ability to understand and effectively use digital technologies and the Internet. Most low-literacy adults in Minnesota have limited digital literacy skills and access. They fall on the other side of the digital divide.

### ABE Bridges the Digital Divide in Minnesota

Minnesota ABE is a key partner in the Northstar Digital Literacy Project, which has defined the basic skills needed to perform tasks on computers and online. Minnesota ABE is adopting



Digital Literacy across the Curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

Northstar digital literacy standards and online assessments as requirements for successfully completing ABE. By passing Northstar assessments, ABE students also meet the new Minnesota Adult High School Diploma digital literacy standards.

Across Minnesota, ABE teachers are integrating digital literacy skill-building into their instruction and building their own skills through professional development. Northstar is also being used as a collaborative service delivery tool by ABE programs and local libraries statewide.

“Digital Literacy for adult students is an **essential skill for their success.** Digital Literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share and create content using information technologies and the Internet.”

- The Digital Literacy Project, Cornell University

### ABE and Libraries: Partners for Digital Literacy

Between March and September of 2014, the libraries and ABE programs of Duluth, Faribault, Moorhead, Saint Cloud, and Worthington collaborated to put Northstar digital literacy tools to use. Supported by funding from a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant under the joint management of the Saint Paul Public Library and the Minnesota Literacy Council, the project helped each ABE-library partnership establish at least one sponsoring site in their community to provide residents with access to the Northstar certificate program. In addition, Northstar-aligned computer instructional programs were offered.

Worthington's Northstar program illustrates digital literacy outcomes that may not have been possible without ABE-library partnerships. The program started with a small group of dedicated students that developed close mentoring relationships with its instructors. The growth of this dynamic program is key to the long-term success of Northstar in a small community like Worthington.



Julie Wellnitz, Director of Nobles County Library (left) and Marty Olsen, Program Manager of Worthington ABE, stand behind Omot Akony Akok, a learner in the Worthington Northstar program.

As of 2014, 44 Minnesota ABE sites – approximately one third of all Northstar proctor locations – have provided nearly 10,000 computer skills assessments and awarded over 4,300 computer skills attainment certificates. These outcomes have increased each month as ABE programs embrace Northstar as a statewide standard.

<sup>1</sup> Hague, C., and Payton, S. (2010, January). Digital Literacy Across the Curriculum. Futurelab/National Foundation for Educational Research (UK).